

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-02 SY-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 NSC-07 NSCE-00 JUSE-00 SCA-01 DRC-01 EB-03

PRS-01 COME-00 AGR-03 SPC-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /058 W

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R 282045Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6615

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 1210

LIMDIS

MEXICO FOR LEGATT

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, SOCI, CGEN, CS

SUBJECT: U.S. FUGITIVE PRESENTS PROPOSAL TO GOCR

REF: SAN JOSE A-151, LIMDIS, OCTOBER 2, 1973 (NOTAL)

1. COSTA RICAN PRESS REPORTED ON MARCH 26 THAT PAUL BARRIENTOS HICKMAN HAS PROPOSED A COLONES 225 MILLION TIMBER AND CELLULOSE OPERATION TO THE COSTA RICAN GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE OPERATION WILL EMPLOY 19,500 PEOPLE, WILL BE INSTALLED IN THE NORTHWEST PART OF THE COUNTRY, AND WILL TAKE 42 MONTHS TO SET UP.

2. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT HICKMAN'S DEPORTATION FROM COSTA RICA, BUT HIS COMFORTABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT FIGUERES AND HIS SON, JOSE MARTI FIGUERES, HAS PROVED AN OBSTACLE TO THOSE EFFORTS. AFTER ASSISTANT LEGAL ATTACHE IN MEXICO CITY HAD MADE HICKMAN'S RECORD AVAILABLE TO APPROPRIATE ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SECURITY AND INFORMED THEM OF HICKMAN'S PRESENCE IN COSTA RICA, ALL TO NO AVAIL, AMBASSADOR VAKY TOOK
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THE MATTER UP WITH PRESIDENT FIGUERES IN SEPTEMBER 1973.
FIGUERES TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AT THAT TIME THAT HICKMAN

WOULD NOT BE DEPORTED. (REFAIR)

3. COMMENT: THE HICKMAN TIMBER AND CELLULOSE PROPOSAL, CURIOUSLY, WAS SENT TO THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE WHERE FIGUERES' CRONY FERNANDO BATALLA REIGNS WITH A SHARP EYE FOR A PROFITABLE DEAL. SECOND ECHELON AGRICULTURE OFFICIALS KNOW LITTLE ABOUT THE PROPOSAL, BUT SAY A PROJECT OF THIS NATURE WOULD NORMALLY BE STUDIED IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY. (MAYBE BATALLA USED HIS CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH FIGUERES TO KEEP THIS ONE FROM MINISTER KOGAN WHO WOULD ALSO NOT TURN DOWN A PROFITABLE OPPORTUNITY.) THE WHOLE SCHEME SOUNDS SIMILAR TO THE SWINDLE HICKMAN PROMOTED IN HONDURAS AND FOR WHICH HE WAS FINALLY ARRESTED AND DEPORTED BY HONDURAN AUTHORITIES: NOT, HOWEVER, BEFORE FLEECING SOME U.S. FIRMS OF MONEY THEY HAD PUT UP TO GUARANTEE THEMSELVES A PART IN THE ENTERPRISE. FIGUERES AND BATALLA MAY BE GETTING MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR.

4. THE PROPOSED OPERATION, THE EMBASSY HAS LEARNED, IS CALLED COCIF INTERNATIONAL, S.A., AND WAS REGISTERED IN COSTA RICA IN JANUARY 1974. IT CLAIMS BACKING FROM INVESTORS IN ENGLAND, CANADA, AND INDIA. EMBASSY SOURCES SAY THE SAME GROUP HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN HONDURAS.
LANE

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